

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 KINGST 05438 01 OF 02 151534Z
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05 PC-01 EB-07 COME-00 AGRE-00
/070 W

----- 011846 /23 45

P R 151445Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3411
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY NASSAU
AMEMBASSY PORT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KINGSTON 5438

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, JM
SUBJECT: THE COST OF THE 1976 ELECTION

1. BEGIN SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION: WHEN TODAY'S ELECTION IS
OVER AND A NEW GOVERNMENT IS FORMED BY WHICHEVER PARTY GAINS
A MAJORITY, JAMAICA WILL REMAIN BESET BY MOUNTING ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS. ON THE EVE OF THE FORMATION OF THAT
NEW GOVERNMENT, IT SEEMS QUITE CLEAR THAT THE VIOLENT
CONDUCT OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN WILL ITSELF
HAVE CONTRIBUTED SUBSTANTIALLY TO THE DIFFICULTIES
OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND MAKE ITS TASK OF MOBILIZING AND
DIRECTING THE ENERGIES OF THE JAMAICANS NEARLY INSURMOUNT-
ABLE. END SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION.

2. AS WE HAVE REPORTED, JAMAICA NOW APPEARS SEVERE-
LY POLARIZED, AND JAMAICANS ARE BESET BY DEEP FORE-
BODINGS. THEY HAVE WATCHED THE CAMPAIGN SLIDE FROM
UGLY MUDSLINGING INTO VICIOUS -- AND DEADLY --
THUGGERY. A "NOW-OR-NEVER" MENTALITY HAS GRIPPED
BOTH THE PEOPLES NATIONAL PARTY (PNP) AND THE JAMAICA
LABOUR PARTY (JLP), AND BOTH ARE CONTESTING AS IF
THE WINNING OF THE ELECTION WILL BE THE LAST ACT RE-
QUIRED OF THEM. A STRAIN OF DESPAIR SEEMS TO UNDER-
LIE THE CAMPAIGNING. THE JLP ASSERTS -- AND PROBABLY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 KINGST 05438 01 OF 02 151534Z

BELIEVES -- THAT THIS ELECTION OFFERS THE LAST CHANCE

FOR DEMOCRACY, AND THAT A PNP VICTORY WILL LEAD INEVITABLY TO SOME FORM OF ONE-PARTY SYSTEM; THE JLP MAY ALSO FEEL THAT THIS CAMPAIGN IS VERY MUCH A "MAKE-OR-BREAK" MATTER FOR ITSELF, AND IF IT LOSES IT WILL DISAPPEAR. FOR THE PNP, THE OUTLOOK IS LESS STARK. HOWEVER, THE RULING PARTY HAS CONCLUDED -- MUCH AIDED BY AUTO-SUGGESTION AND REINFORCEMENT BY REPETITION -- THAT A JLP GOVERNMENT WOULD UNDO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MEASURES IT HAS INTRODUCED. BOTH PARTIES VIEW THE ELECTION IN BASICALLY APOCALYPTIC TERMS.

3. THE EXTENT OF VIOLENCE IN THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN IS SIMPLY THE MOST DRAMATIC MANIFESTATION OF THE ATTITUDES WHICH MARK THE TWO PARTIES. JAMAICAN SOCIETY IS PRESENTLY FACING PROFOUND STRAINS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE HEAVY INTERNAL MIGRATION INTO THE KINGSTON AREA FROM RURAL SETTINGS HAS RESULTED IN VERY DISTINCT EVIDENCES OF ANOMIE, WITH PERHAPS A THIRD OF JAMAICA'S POPULATION NOW LOCATED IN THE KINGSTON, ST. ANDREW AND ST. CATHERINE PARISHES, THE AMELIORATION -- NOT TO SAY CURE -- OF THIS TROUBLESOME PHENOMENON WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR ANY GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER EXTENSIVE ITS SKILLS AND RESOURCES MIGHT BE. GIVEN THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS NOT ONLY OF THE URBAN DWELLERS BUT ALSO OF THOSE ON THE NORTH COAST WHO HAVE WATCHED TOURISM FADE AND THEIR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES ERODE, AND OF THOSE IN RURAL AREAS WHO DEPEND ON AGRICULTURE AND HAVE SEEN EXPORT CROPS LOSE THEIR COMPETITIVE EDGE, THE LEVEL OF DISTRESS THROUGHOUT THE ISLAND IS UNSURPRISING. HOWEVER, WHAT IS DEEPLY TROUBLING IS THE EASY USE AND MANIPULATION OF VIOLENCE BY THE PNP AND THE JLP. THIS CAMPAIGN, AND THE YEAR LEADING UP TO IT, HAVE BEEN MARKED BY ARSON, MIDNIGHT RAIDS BY GUNMEN, STAGED INCIDENTS AND MURDER. EACH OF THE PARTIES HAS ACCUSED THE OTHER OF PROMOTING OR ENCOURAGING THESE EXAMPLES OF VIOLENCE, BUT INsofar AS WE CAN JUDGE, BOTH PARTIES ARE EQUALLY GUILTY. THE OBJECT OF THE VIOLENCE IS TO INTIMIDATE OPPONENTS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS AND TO REINFORCE THE COM-

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 KINGST 05438 01 OF 02 151534Z

MITMENT OF FOLLOWERS AND TO GAIN NEW RECRUITS THROUGH THE DEMONSTRATION OF NAKED POWER. BUT THE CHIEF RESULT IS TO DEEPEN POLARIZATION.

4. WITH VIOLENCE COMMANDING SO MUCH ATTENTION, THE VERBAL ATTACKS HAVE COME TO CAPTURE LESS ATTENTION. MOREOVER, THE VERY EXTRAVAGANCE OF THE SLOGANS AND CLAIMS HAS INEVITABLY BROUGHT THE LAW OF DIMINISHING

RETURNS INTO ACTIVE PLAY. NEVERTHELESS, THE MUD-SLINGING ASPECTS OF THE CAMPAIGN HAVE ADDED TO THE INTENSIFICATION OF POLARIZATION. THESE ARISE OUT OF APPEALS TO RACIAL AND CLASS FEELING. JLP LEADER EDDIE SEAGA HAS COME UNDER HEAVY CRITICISM FOR HIS FAIR SKIN, AND REFERENCES TO HIS AMERICAN BIRTH ARE INTENDED TO DEMONSTRATE NOT ONLY THAT HE IS NOT A "REAL" JAMAICAN BUT TO REMIND THE ELECTORATE THAT "REAL" JAMAICANS ARE BLACK. ACCORDING TO GLEANER COLUMNIST MALCOLM SHARP, WE IN KINGSTON ARE BARELY AWARE OF THE VIGOR OF THE RACIAL SLURS; HE NOTES THAT THEIR INTENSITY INCREASES WITH THE DISTANCE FROM KINGSTON. SHARP ALSO CITES INSTANCES OF ANTI-CHINESE RHETORIC TO DEMONSTRATE THAT WHITES ARE NOT THE ONLY TARGET.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 KINGST 05438 02 OF 02 151540Z
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05 PC-01 EB-07 COME-00 AGRE-00
/070 W

----- 011954 /23 45

P R 151445Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3412
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY NASSAU
AMEMBASSY PORT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KINGSTON 5438

5. THE TWO PARTIES HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY EVENLY MATCHED WHEN EITHER VIOLENCE OR VITUPERATION ARE INVOLVED. HOWEVER, THERE IS ONE AREA WHERE THE PNP HAS THE ADVANTAGE. AS A RESULT OF ITS INCUMBENCY, THE PNP HAS NOT ONLY BEEN ABLE TO USE THE VARIOUS INSTRUMENTALITIES OF GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE THE CAUSE OF ITS CANDIDATES (SEE KINGSTON 5375 FOR EXAMPLE) BUT PERHPAS MORE IMPORTANTLY WILL BE ABLE TO INFLUENCE THE POLLING ITSELF IN SIGNIFICANT FASHION. LISTS OF NEW VOTERS ARE ONLY NOW BEING

RELEASED, TOO LATE FOR IMPROPER INCLUSIONS OR EXCLUSIONS TO BE CHALLENGED. PNP SUPPORTERS CONTROL THE POLLING PLACES IN MOST AREAS, AND PNP FUNCTIONARIES HAVE ALLEGEDLY BEEN GIVEN VOTER IDENTIFICATION CARDS TO DISTRIBUTE. WE HAVE NO REASON TO THINK THAT THE JLP IS PREPARED TO BE ANY MORE SCRUPULOUS THAN THE RULING PARTY, BUT ITS OPPORTUNITIES TO MANIPULATE THE ELECTORAL PROCESS ARE FAR FEWER.

6. THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN, BOTH THE PNP AND THE JLP HAVE SEEN THE ISSUES IN STARK TERMS AND HAVE TENDED TO SEE THEIR OWN VERY EXISTENCE IN JEOPARDY. BOTH HAVE SEEN THE END OF THE ELECTION AS THE RETENTION OR ACQUISITION OF POWER, BUT THEIR RHETORIC NOTWITHSTANDING, THERE SEEMS LITTLE REASON

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 KINGST 05438 02 OF 02 151540Z

TO CONCLUDE THAT THEY HAVE GIVEN SERIOUS THOUGHT TO WHAT COMES AFTER POWER IS SECURED. IN THE QUEST FOR POWER, BOTH HAVE ADOPTED PRACTICES WHICH WILL MAKE MORE THAN ORDINARILY DIFFICULT THE SPIRIT OF ACCOMMODATION AND CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM WHICH WILL BE REQUIRED IF JAMAICA'S PROBLEMS ARE TO BE ADDRESSED EFFECTIVELY. UNLESS ONE PARTY OR THE OTHER IS ABLE TO COME OUT OF THE ELECTION WITH A SIZABLE MAJORITY AND AN UNAMBIGUOUS MANDATE, THE LEGACY OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN WILL ACTIVELY HINDER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ANY COHESIVE SOLUTIONS TO THE NATION'S PROBLEMS. GERARD

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, NATIONAL ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976KINGST05438
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760461-1320
From: KINGSTON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761242/aaaabjor.tel
Line Count: 202
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 JUL 2004 by saccheem>; APPROVED <13 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE COST OF THE 1976 ELECTION
TAGS: PINT, PINS, JM
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006